

The Epistle to the Romans

Ch. 14

A kid from Snake Belly, Texas lands a sales job at WalMart. After Day One his boss asks, "Well, son, how'd ya do?" "I made one sale, sir." "Only one? How much?" "\$450,000," says the kid. "Don't lie to me, boy!" "Nawsir, I sold him a tiny J-hook and cheap fishing line, then a larger circle hook and monofilament line, then a big snapper hook and that fancy braided line. I asked where he's fishin'. Says, 'The Gulf.' "So I sold him a 37-foot trawler. His VW cain't pull it, so I wrote up a loaded Ram 1500." His boss is hyperventilating: "And all he came in for was a fish hook?" "Nawsir, he come to get a gift for his mother-in-law who's stayin' over, so I says, 'Sir, your weekend's already shot; you might as well go fishin.'"

Paul, that fisher of men, has penned history's most influential letter to Christ's believers in Rome. Converted, temple-bred Jews alongside formerly pagan Gentile believers -- once polar opposites, now saved and trying to do church together -- are sparring over do's and don'ts. **Let's read Romans 14:1-23 (p. 845).**

Veggie Tales Romans 14:1-8

The "weak" are new believers, probably Jews, who eat no meat, in case it had been offered to idols, making it "unclean" under Jewish law. They're into rituals, circumcision, dietary laws, special days, feasts, etc. The "strong" know that food isn't what defiles us.

If our having meat and wine would tempt the weak to violate their convictions, we're to refrain, and to not bicker over the Sabbath being Saturday or Sunday (**Galatians 4:9-11**). Paul says *all things* are yours, even food and drink, since you are Christ's and Christ is God's (**1 Corinthians 8:4-13**). God owns it all, meatballs to Mogen David; be sure your choices please God (**Galatians 5:1-6, 13-15**).

During their transition from works-based spirituality to salvation-by-faith-alone, Jews and Gentiles were learning to not act über-holy, and to not have a judgmental attitude, but to build each other up.

DISCUSS: **Why do some think that God is more impressed when we live by do's and don't's than by living with total, "mature" freedom?**

If You've Got It, Flaunt It Not Romans 14:9-18

Neither weak nor strong should brag about their disciplined performance or their freedom (Acts 10:15). They're to cut slack for each other since both are answerable only to God, and He has guaranteed an A+ to both at the final judgment (Romans 8:1).

Christ's followers will go before the Judgment Seat of Christ where rewards for conduct in this life are given or withheld, but their salvation is **not** in question (**1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 4:2-5; Romans 8:35-39**). **Christ's rejecters**, however, face the Great White Throne Judgment when those whose names are not in God's Book of Life will be "cast into the lake of fire" *forever* (**Revelation 20:11-15**).

Henry Morris says God has "revealed to us all the great events of the future throughout the remainder of the Church Age, the Tribulation, the Millennium and the last judgment. The new earth will come, and the new Jerusalem, and we have been given just a glimpse of the glories of the ages to come."

Peter is warned to not blacklist foods that God has OK'd (Acts 10:9-13; **Colossians 2:20-21**). When it comes to things God neither requires nor bans, forcing our convictions on others could discourage them from knowing Jesus. What can't be compromised is the deity of Christ and the meaning of His death and resurrection (Jude 3,4,17-25). God's goodness, not rigid, do's and don't lists, attracts us to Him (2 Timothy 2:22-26).

DISCUSS: What would it take for you to surrender your rights so that your fellow believers may exercise theirs free of intimidation?

Bend, Don't Break **Romans 14:19-23**

"Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive." Nothing is worth causing someone to sin (**Mark 7:1-8, 14-23; 1 Corinthians 6:12**). Prayerfully determine how God wants you to live, then *live* that way with His peace and His joy.

DISCUSS: What could a believer do that might prompt others to stumble?

Majoring on minors shreds Christian unity (Titus 1:10-16; Hebrews 11:6). God's sacrificial love does no harm, thus we should place others ahead of us, and avoid being a bad influence to those younger (or "weaker") in their faith. So what's Paul saying here?

- God forgave you, not based on performance or spiritual maturity.
- Be sure of your convictions; put others' welfare above yours.
- Some non-essentials may be right for one but wrong for another.
- "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love."

DISCUSS: What are some things God considers to be "essentials?"

DISCUSS: If you're to accept others without condemning, judging or criticizing, what if anything must change within you?

For 4,000 years -- from Adam and Eve to the cross -- God offered *temporary* forgiveness of sin via animal and vegetable sacrifices. For *permanent* pardon only a *perfect* sacrifice would do.

Here's the Gospel – don't blink: "God has already made peace with you through Christ" **(2 Corinthians 5:18-21)**! **God forgave every sin separating Him and you – past, present and future.** Thanks to His love, grace and mercy, God no longer holds your sins against you because Christ, the *only perfect Sacrifice*, went to the cross for you.

To receive His total forgiveness by faith, invite Him to be your Savior and Lord. Would now be a good time for you to take care of that "essential?" We'll wait a silent moment for you to do that.

And everybody said "Jesus rocks!"

His Deal

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In Christ Alone ----- *Newsboys, 3:07*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3qZfizknWw&list=PL1980A88A7149287E>

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my Light, my Strength, my Song
This Cornerstone, this Solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless Babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
'til He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand